Technology Rich Inquiry Based Research

Documentation: A Tool for Family Engagement

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My Introduction
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POLL

The View of Pedagogical Documentation as a Tool for Learning, Communication and Engagement!

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Three Elements of Pedagogical Documentation

Listen **Observe**
Observe in everyday moments and everyday spaces indoors and outdoors

Record **Document**
Document the 100 languages of children as they represent and re-represent their learning to make the learning visible to share with others – families, colleagues, children.

Share **Interpret**
Invite the interpretation of others. Take time to analyze the different interpretations/perspectives. Consider how you will use the knowledge gained to move forward.

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Teachers must leave behind an isolated, silent mode of working, which leaves no traces. Instead they must discover ways to communicate and document the children's evolving experiences at school. They must prepare a steady flow of quality information targeted to parents but appreciated by children and teachers ~ Loris Malaguzzi

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Pedagogical Documentation

- Makes learning visible.
- A platform for reflective practice and family engagement.
- Complexity and ambiguity is part of the process.
- Supports a continual search for meaning that can lead pedagogy/curriculum.

*When documentation has pedagogy as its focus it becomes pedagogical. If pedagogy is the study of teaching and learning, and documentation serves as a record, then **pedagogical documentation is the recording of the teaching and learning**. It is not a straightforward listing of daily events, but rather a study of those events as they relate to teaching and learning.*
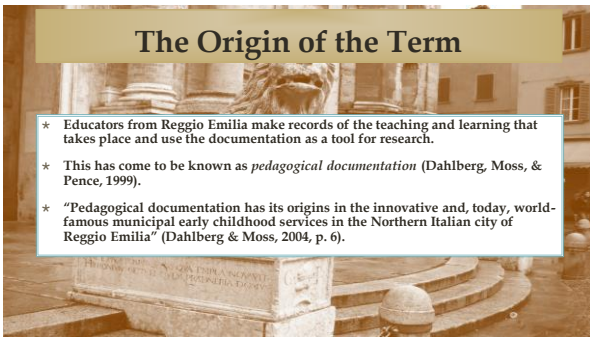
The Origin of the Term

- **Educators from Reggio Emilia make records of the teaching and learning that takes place and use the documentation as a tool for research.**
- **This has come to be known as *pedagogical documentation* (Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 1999).**
- **"Pedagogical documentation has its origins in the innovative and, today, world-famous municipal early childhood services in the Northern Italian city of Reggio Emilia" (Dahlberg & Moss, 2004, p. 6).**

Benefits to Educators

- Professional Learning
- Learning about Learning
- Reflection

Benefits to Children

- Family and Community Involvement
- Children as Active Participants
- Children Recall and Build on Past Experiences

Benefits to Families

- Transparency
- Communication
- Support and Education

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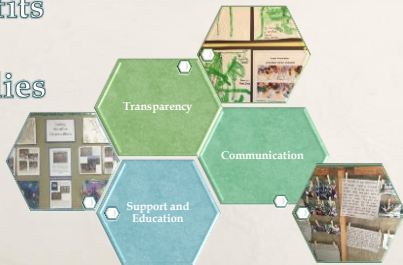
Documentation provides an extraordinary opportunity for parents, as it gives them the possibility to know not only what their child is doing, but also the how and why, the meaning that the child gives to what he or she does, and the shared meanings with the other children . . . But documentation also offers the parents the value of comparison, discussion, and exchange with other parents and fosters growth in each parent's awareness of his or her own role and identity. Sharing the documentation means participating in a true act of democracy, sustaining the culture and visibility of childhood, both inside and outside of school. This democratic participation, or "participant democracy," is a product of exchange and visibility (Rinaldi, 1996, p. 2)

Sharing and Receiving Documentation

- Imagine being at work and receiving this video of your son at child care.
- Let's watch the video.
- Now visualize picking up your son and stopping for a few minutes to start a dialogue with the parent of the other child in the video.
- In the car on the way home, imagine having a dialogue with your child about the crossing the bridge video.
- What did you talk about to the other parent and to your son?

Your Child was ABLE to:

- ★ Crossing the "river" and not get wet
- ★ Balance
- ★ Problem solving
- ★ Make a plan and executing it
- ★ Show confidence: (I can do it!)
- ★ Build a bridge
- ★ Make water move

- ★ Think about weight: will it hold?
- ★ Think about their friends: (if Grayson were here …)
- ★ What else?
- ★ What's next?

What's Next for the Educator?

★ Begin with the WHAT – it is more than a bridge! Avoid considering the noun (the bridge) and focus on the verbs and the image of the child.

★ Think about the meaningful – the SO WHAT.

★ NOW WHAT – how will you build on the children's experiences?
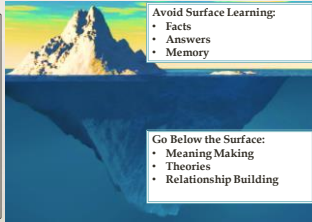
The Role of the Educator

★ Decides the content of the curriculum and the pedagogical approach based on observations, documentation and interpretations.

★ Rather than "I follow themes" or "I follow interests" consider **making meaning** with children!

★ Go deeper!

★ Make documentation pedagogical.

Avoid Surface Learning:
• **Facts**
• **Answers**
• **Memory**

Go Below the Surface:
• **Meaning Making**
• **Theories**
• **Relationship Building**

Going Deeper

• Taking photos of special events such as a trip to a park or the zoo and then describing the experience as 'the children had fun in the park' or 'the children enjoyed seeing the animals at the zoo" is not pedagogical documentation.

• These descriptors lack meaning and show limited information about learning and development to those who are viewing the documentation.

Pedagogical documentation "is not a real-time movie or a record of events, but a subjective set of frozen moments that provoke, inform, record, and provide opportunities for further thinking, wonder, able to be offered back to children for comment and reflection" (Fleet, Patterson & Robertson, 2012, p. 7).

- Focus on children's strengths rather than weaknesses or gaps.

- Support the view of the child as capable and competent.

- Make documentation something that families want to receive and take pride in!

- "Nothing without Joy"!

Consider Ethics

- Everyone represented in the documentation must be informed about how the documentation will be used.

- Ensure that no child depicted is shown in a negative light or that sharing of the documentation will harm the child in anyway (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015).

Going Public

* As observation notes are collected, photos printed and the children's representations of their learning sorted through, teachers are engaged in a process of collecting documentation.

* The documentation can be posted on the wall or shared digitally with families but it does not become pedagogical until it is interpreted and analyzed by the teacher and others, including the children and families, to create a curriculum/pedagogical path.

Be Open

* Be open to possible challenges and criticisms.

* The goal of the documentation process and interactive interpretation is to move beyond one person's perspective.

* Create dialogue rich in meaning and perspectives.

The Whale Shark Example

My Interpretation

It wasn't about sharks! The big ideas were about creativity, power, and strength. It is about expression in 100 different languages. It is about engagement and a sense of belonging. It is about building a community of learners engaging together in a common inquiry. It is about teachers honouring children's ideas and input.
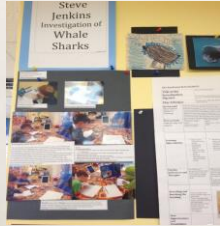
To Support Interpretation

- *How are the children demonstrating that they are competent and capable of complex thinking?*

- *How is the child's current approach to a problem different from an earlier response?*

- *What questions and theories do you think the child has about the world around them?*

- *How is the child going about finding answers to his/her questions or testing their theories?*

- *How does the child form relationships with materials and with others? (How Does Learning Happen: Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years, 2014, p. 22)*
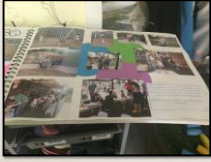
Forms of Documentation

Collaborative Documentation Books

- Children, families and educators can view the books when they are accessible to them.
- Those viewing the books can be encouraged to add perspectives and comments creating a "living" document.
- Multiple books can be made available in different areas of the indoor and outdoor environments.

Children's Portfolios

- Created using PowerPoint or available software applications.
- Photographs, written observations, and learning stories/narratives can be included.
- Children's representations or "work samples" can be included and children can have a voice in deciding what they would like to have in their portfolio.
- Portfolios are intended to illustrate a child's abilities rather than deficits.

Documentation Panels

- ★ Accessible so as to invite interpretation.
- ★ Interactive so as to invite interpretation.
- ★ Attention paid to visual literacy so as to invite interpretation.

Documentation can be created digitally on a computer and printed out to be arranged aesthetically on a panel or bulletin board.

Consider Visual Literacy/Design

* SCALE – the distance between the design and the audience
* EFFICIENCY – is there too much information?
* IMPACT – does it draw you in?
* CURIOSITY – does it pique your interest?
* ATTACTIVENESS – pleasing to the eye?
* ATTENTION – to colour, shape, texture, space.

For more information see: Making Learning Visible -
http://www.mlvpz.org/index976.html

Digital Documentation

Digital Documentation Overview

- Documentation that is created digitally can be shared with families via email, through social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook and Instagram or through software applications such as HiMama.
- By sharing digital documentation it becomes accessible offering opportunities for interpretations from others.
- When sharing via social media it is good practice to have current consent forms for each child depicted or to only focus on the photos where children can not be identified.

What is HiMama?

- HiMama is a digital program for phone, computer and tablet that aids with:
    - Daily documentation;
    - In-classroom observation;
    - Family engagement;
    - Developmental assessment;
    - Administration.
- HiMama provides a varied experience through password-protected logins:
    - **Teachers** can check-in children, document learning, plan lessons, and interact with parents.
    - **Directors** can oversee centre activity through administrative reporting.
    - **Parents** can view photos, videos, and activity notes, and message teachers.

BELOW: See how an update can be made and sent to parents using HiMama:
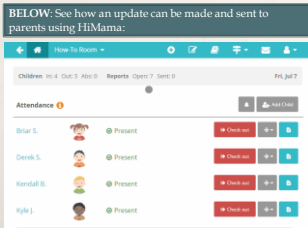
Choosing An Appropriate Digital Solution

- Digital documentation solutions need to be chosen carefully and implemented thoughtfully.
- An appropriate digital solution should provide benefits for:
    - **Educators**, by encouraging meaningful, not menial documentation.
    - **Children,** by supporting development through pedagogical processes.
    - **Families,** by allowing them to connect on their terms.

Sound familiar? Signs of a poor digital solution:

"A classroom teacher's time will be consumed, devoured, and drained by the amount of work needed to record all of this information."

"It is very important that the teacher builds a VERBAL relationship with the parent and the use of daily technology prevents that from happening."

"The teachers had to spend more time doing paperwork and documentation boards than interacting with the children."

Encourage educators to create meaningful, not menial documentation

* Pictures and videos can be taken and attached to observations more easily, without printing.
* Less time on writing duplicate information and more time recording insights (All children visited the park vs. your child practiced her balance on a bridge).
* Children's information is made private through secure logins and organized automatically.
* Educators can more easily build partnerships with families through transparency and frequency of communication.
* Educators are empowered to manage their classroom and showcase the professionalism and expertise of the ECE profession to their families.
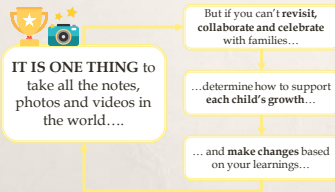
Child development should be supported through pedagogical processes

* Any documentation process, digital or not, should encourage reflection and planning based on the twists and turns of a child's development and learning.
* Photos and videos without context will not encourage meaningful dialogue nor will they be useful for the educator to revisit in the future ("when was this again?").

IT IS ONE THING to take all the notes, photos and videos in the world….

But if you can't **revisit, collaborate and celebrate** with families…

…determine how to support **each child's growth**…

… and **make changes** based on your learnings…

THEN WHAT'S THE POINT?

Digital solutions should facilitate adaptable lesson planning and assessment

* Every observation is a portfolio and can be tagged with skills, indicators, notes, photos, videos, comments.
* Development can be viewed as a portfolio over time or by domain, for a holistic view of a child's growth.
* Educators can edit lesson plans based on their learnings in the classroom.

Allow for a variety of conversations that address the needs of the family

Families want to connect with their child's centre for many reasons – technology should address those curiosities.

Marky Michels

himama

Interests From HiMama Families

Development
"I enjoy watching every little thing my son learns."

Dialogue
"It's handy to see what the "nothing" your preschooler says he did all day, actually is!"

Wellbeing
"The updates I had about my baby's eating habits actually helped my doctor give us a plan of action when he wasn't doing so well."

Reassurance
"The first time I received an update about my daughter, it made me cry because I could see she was happy and in great hands."

Digital Feature

Online portfolio with domain and skill tags

Shared lesson plans and activities

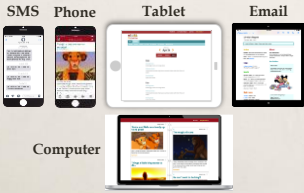Health, meal and bathroom updates

Real-time notifications

Families want to receive information digitally

SMS **Phone** **Tablet** **Email**

Computer

Don't forget the option to print!

* Cross-platform functionality allows families to participate in their child's learning on their terms without having to learn a new tool.

* Documentation should be interactive so that families are **engaged as partners, not just involved,** with the ability to comment and message on specific activities and updates.

* Educators should be encouraged to respond back to parent messages and cultivate organic relationships.

Family engagement is central to a child's development; it is the educators responsibility to ensure open lines of communication – in 2017, technology enables this.

Family Engagement as an Outcome

* Family is more inclusive than "parent".

* Engagement is different than involvement.

* Engagement is empowering to families.

* Engagement enables families to take their place alongside educators, fitting together their knowledge of children, teaching and learning, with teachers' knowledge.

Pushor (2005)

14

Stand aside for a while and leave room for learning, observe carefully what children do, and then, if you have understood well, perhaps teaching will be different from beforeb~ Loris Malaguzzi

Final Thoughts and Thank You!

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